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ABSTRACT

Education program specialists in the United States Department of Education establish and lead the education program, policies, and activities for which the Department of Education is responsible under law. This brochure provides information about the job of education program specialist, describing how the specialists fit into the department's mission, what they do, their qualifications, personal skills, and training opportunities. Education program specialists are involved in the following programs: School Improvement Programs; Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC); National Workplace Literacy Program; Education for Homeless Children and Youth; Captioning and Adaptation Branch; Transitional Bilingual Program; and Accreditation and State Liaison Division. Six education specialists are profiled and two figures are included. (LMI)

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ED 402 668

Careers in the U.S. Department of Education

Education Program Specialist

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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Careers in the U.S. Department of Education

Education Program Specialist

Skill Clinic
Horace Mann Learning Center
Personnel Management Service

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MISSION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The mission of the U.S. Department of Education is to ensure equal *access* to education and to promote educational *excellence* throughout the nation. Recognizing that state and local governments bear responsibility for education, the Department of Education assists and provides leadership in accordance with national education policies and objectives.

Beginning in 1867, the original Department collected information on schools and teaching that would help states establish effective school systems. Over the years, the federal role has grown in response to the need for national leadership. The Department now manages more than 230 legislated educational programs providing more than $30 billion in funding to support improvements in education at all levels, preschool through adult. In 1989, a National Education Summit established six National Education Goals for the year 2000, including school readiness for every child; a high school graduation rate of at least 90 percent; demonstrated student competency in challenging subject matter at the end of grades 4, 8, and 12; world leadership in math and science; universal adult literacy and skills to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and a drug-free, disciplined environment in every school in America.

HOW EDUCATION PROGRAM SPECIALISTS FIT INTO THE MISSION

Education program specialists establish and lead the education programs, policies, and activities for which the Department of Education is responsible under law. They promote, coordinate, and improve standards and opportunities. They help the education community apply promising solutions to specific problems. They ensure access to education opportunities for students of both sexes and for students disadvantaged by economic, racial, geographic, or physical or mental barriers. They improve the quality of education through research, development, demonstration, dissemination of information, and training. They ensure that Department policies and programs fit appropriately into federal-state and federal-local relationships or federal-private institution relationships. They ensure that projects funded with federal monies are making substantial progress towards accomplishing their performance goals and objectives.

Here are a few examples of the many programs involving education program specialists:

School Improvement Programs, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Deputy Director Arthur Cole, GM-15, says: "We administer the School Improvement Account with a variety of programs including the Mathematics and Science Program, a Drug-free Schools and Communities Act Program, a Magnet Schools Program, School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Project, and programs for arts in education and for women's equity."

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC Program), Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Director Robert Stonehill, GM-15, says: "ERIC is the world's biggest bibliographic data base with over 800,000 summaries of documents and journal articles. ERIC also produces 200 publications and about 20 million microfiche copies of documents a year and responds to about 100,000 public inquiries. ERIC acquires and analyzes all of the major education literature, and we make the most current information available throughout the world."

National Workplace Literacy Program, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Program Officer Marian Banfield, GS-12, says: "We're here to improve worker productivity. We are responsible for program regulations, meeting the needs of the field, awarding grants, and monitoring projects."

Education for Homeless Children and Youth, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Project Officer Francine Vinson, GS-13, says: "We provide funds to 55 state agencies to ensure that homeless children receive their appropriate education." Vinson disseminates infor-

mation, reviews and approves state plans, monitors projects, and responds to state coordinators.

Captioning and Adaptation Branch, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The program supports the development and dissemination of closed-captioned technology and delivery systems (decoders). It includes: research and development in captioning technology and educational media for instruction of persons with hearing impairment and other disabilities, training in the use of educational media, and development and implementation of strategies for efficient distribution of high-quality captioned products. The program provides access to open-captioned educational and general interest films and videos.

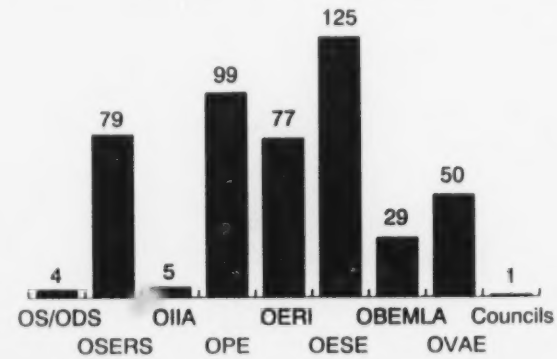
Project Officer Ramon Rodriguez, GS-13, says: "I manage programs in media research utilizing captioning technology to improve the literacy ability of persons who are hearing-impaired and also those with other disabilities."

Transitional Bilingual Program, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs. Program Officer Luis Catarineau, GS-13, says: "The students involved in the program will eventually make the transition into the all-English curriculum within three to five years. The population that we serve are students with limited English proficiency as identified by the local education agency. From 50 students to 1000-plus are in any one program."

Accreditation and State Liaison Division, Office of Postsecondary Education. Acting Director Karen Kershenstein, GM-14, says: "We administer the process by which accrediting agencies become recognized by the Secretary."

Accrediting agencies are organizations that evaluate institutions based on certain standards, policies, and procedures to determine if they offer quality education or training. Accreditation is voluntary; however, students attending schools not accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the Secretary of Education are not eligible for federal student aid.

Distribution of Education Program Specialists Across the Department

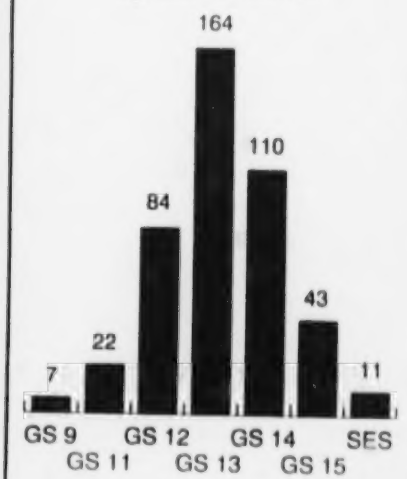


Left to right: Offices of the Secretary/Deputy Secretary; Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs; Postsecondary Education; Educational Research and Improvement; Elementary and Secondary Education; Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs; Vocational and Adult Education; and National Advisory Councils.

WHAT EDUCATION PROGRAM SPECIALISTS DO

Expertise in education and program management are the hallmarks of the Department's approximately 450 education program specialists. Positions include nonsupervisory, supervisory, or management official positions in General Schedule (GS) grades 5 to 15, and those in the Senior Executive Service (SES). Prior to November 1993, supervisory positions in grades 13-15 were titled "GM." Those titles still exist, but now are officially in the GS series.

Distribution of Education Program Specialists by Grade Level



Specialists come from varied academic and work backgrounds and perform different jobs, but all apply professional educational knowledge and experience to federal policy and programs. Nearly half of the education program specialists have academic backgrounds in education. Many are trained in social sciences; others specialized in psychology, business and management, and foreign languages. Individuals from more than 300 academic majors serve as education program specialists.

They work with elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions, or other types of institutions and programs, such as vocational training or assistance to students with disabilities. They work with state education agencies, local education agencies, and with professional educators in the public and private sectors. Specialists maintain close contact with professional research and training organizations and with service programs that apply new practices and technology.

Some specialists evaluate education plans and policies. Others review proposals for innovative or demonstration projects. Some help in the development of legislation and regulations. Some collaborate with individuals or groups to identify and assess high-priority educational needs and evaluate proposals to fill these needs. Many specialists are responsible for administering federally-funded education programs. They monitor approved projects and provide technical assistance on educational and administrative problems.

New entry-level specialists often start out performing administrative tasks to learn about their programs before taking on more responsibility. When Marian Banfield entered the Department as a GS-9, she did administrative support work that involved organizing and maintaining files, writing letters, organizing applications, and planning conferences and technical-review panel meetings. Three years later she is a GS-12 and is responsible for 37 workplace literacy projects worth $10 million.

Some specialists apply emerging technology to education programs. Ramon Rodriguez, a former teacher and administrator in programs for hearing-impaired and deaf persons and professor at Gallaudet University, is excited about a project that will develop a centralized program in such subjects as language, math, and science that will teach hearing-impaired students via satellite. He says: "Deafness is a low-incidence disability, and students are scattered all over the country. By utilizing satellite downlinks and uplinks, you can provide quality courses in those areas that would be very expensive for one school program to offer."

Specialists are located in the U.S. Department of Education headquarters in Washington, D.C., but much of their work is done with education projects throughout the United States. Travel is a key part of many positions.

Francine Vinson

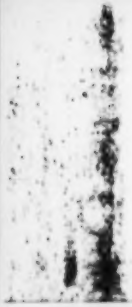
Project Officer for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
GS-13, 26 years service

Francine Vinson, Project Officer for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, calls her program, which provides formula grants to states to ensure that homeless children receive a free and appropriate public education, "challenging and rewarding." She says: "The McKinney Act requires states to change any law, regulation, practice, or policy that would prohibit a child from going to school. There are a host of problems and barriers that prevent homeless children from enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school–most often transportation. States are required to develop a plan to facilitate enrollment and, if there are barriers, state coordinators must take steps to revise the laws."

Vinson, a GS-13, joined the Office of Education as a GS-2 secretary 26 years ago. A career intern program allowed her to continue her higher education while getting practical experience in a professional position. She became an education program specialist at GS-7 with a career ladder to GS-13. Vinson earned her bachelor's in business management with a minor in education administration, and has taken postgraduate courses.

BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT: "Between 1989 and 1991, 64,000 of 322,000 homeless children were not attending school. Now about 20 percent of those children are in school. I have developed strong relationships with the state coordinators and work very closely with them. That is something that I'm proud of. Their response to me is very warm."

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: "To help the coordinators find ways to overcome various barriers, for example the transportation issue is a major barrier nationally. A lot of our kids do not get to school because they simply can't get from one place to another. Some states complain; most say they don't have money for extra buses or tokens so the challenge is to get state and local education agencies to be responsible for educating their own children."



WHAT IT TAKES TO BE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM SPECIALIST

Education program specialist applicants must have a professional knowledge of education theories, principles, processes, and practices. The basic requirements for entry at the GS-5 level are: (1) a bachelor's degree that included at least 24 semester hours in a field related to the position to be filled, with at least 9 semester hours in education courses; or (2) a combination of education and experience that included the 24 semester hours and 9 semester hours described in (1); or (3) four years of professional education program specialist experience; or (4) one full academic year of professional teaching experience.

At GS-7 and above, candidates must have specialized experience or graduate level education related to the work of the particular education program specialist position. A candidate may be qualified for placement above the GS-5 level based on graduate education, academic excellence, or work experience. For example, in order to enter at the GS-9 level, a candidate must meet the minimum entry-level requirements described above; *and* have two full years of progressively higher-level graduate-level education, or one year of specialized experience related to the position and which is equivalent to the next lower level in the federal service.

Most specialists say they learned how government works on the job. They point out that you need to be a quick and continuing student of legislation, funding, and regulation of your area because there is constant change. Mike Ward, GS-14, chief of Secondary Education Transition Branch, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, says: "I learned everything—the whole grant process and policy development—on the job."

Most specialist jobs are filled through the civil service system in which applicants compete on a merit basis. Those hired on career appointments into the government for the first time serve one year in a probationary period. They also serve two additional years in career-conditional status before being eligible for conversion to career status. Excepted appointments, which are exempt from the competitive procedures, are made for stay-in-school and cooperative education students, persons with disabilities, attorneys, and consultants and experts.

Each job is filled through a formal announcement that sets forth the qualifications needed, specialized experience required, salary range, major duties, level of responsibility, and other pertinent information. The job announcement also lists the weights that selective factors will be given in assessing applicants. Candidates are advised to address those skills, knowledges, and abilities and demonstrate how their education and experience relate to those factors.

Some specialists' jobs are designated as career ladder positions, in which the potential promotion sequence covers more than one grade level. For example, for a GS-9/11/12 career ladder position, the supervisor can hire someone at the GS-9,-11, or -12 level. A person hired at GS-9 would then be able to advance to the GS-12 without competing again for promotions.

Lateral movement to a job other than education program specialist within the Department may occur when an employee has, or develops, expertise in another area, such as program analyst. However, the candidate must demonstrate that he or she has the necessary qualifications to perform the work. In those instances where a candidate could receive a promotion or there is an increase in promotion potential, the candidate must compete for the position. Lateral movement can also occur within the education program specialist job series, such as when an individual working in one program or office moves to another program or office but still does education program work.

Ralph Hines

Chief, International Studies Branch,
Center for International Education
Office of Postsecondary Education
GM-14, 22 years service

"We help institutions develop and improve their programs in international studies and foreign languages," says Ralph Hines, who joined the Office of Education 22 years ago as a GS-5. Hines, now a grade 14 supervisor with a staff of 8, oversees five discretionary grant programs.

Trained as a secondary social studies teacher, Hines earned his master's in higher education focusing on curriculum and administration while at the Department. "In this field a graduate degree was very important," he says. "It certainly established legitimacy." He also graduated from the Department's Senior Manager's Program (since replaced by the Management Development Program).

Hines says, "I've had a number of people who have helped guide me. Coming into government there are a lot of things you don't know, not only from a disciplinary standpoint, but from an organizational standpoint and also the idea of where one puts his or her emphasis in terms of training, learning various skills necessary to become a good program officer, and learning how to function and operate with the academic clientele and with other governmental entities."

Hines credits part-time sales jobs with helping him learn how to deal with people and gain self-confidence. He says: "If you can develop interpersonal skills that allow you to be able to deal with a variety of educators, administrators, and government officials, that's a real plus."

Communication skills also help because, he says, "as a specialist, you spend a lot of time playing the role of PR officer."

Hines says: "I like the travel, the opportunity to meet with educators and administrators. I like working with my peers developing programs that train our future teachers and upgrade the skills of faculty and administrators in the international area."

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: "Dealing with my foreign counterparts. We have to be on top of the various educational climates in a variety of foreign countries. We also need to know the cultural/educational climate here in the U.S."

SKILLS, TALENTS, & PERSONAL STYLES OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM SPECIALISTS

While their duties vary, successful specialists possess certain skills, talents, and personal styles. They are good communicators, listeners, managers, and analysts. They are detail-oriented. They manage their time well and meet deadlines. They are creative, knowledgeable, thorough, and work well with others.

Mary Jean LeTendre, SES, Director of Compensatory Education Programs, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, says: "The most important skills are being able to know and understand the program that you work with, being able to work on human relationships, being able to be responsive to the public, and being able to articulate your views, orally and in writing."

"You need to be creative," says Gisela Harkin, GM-14, Career Guidance Program Specialist, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. "It's very important to be an initiator, instead of just responding to crises. You need to be able to work well with other people in teams or work groups. It's not a job that you can do by yourself."

The most important factor in being successful, says Jill Edwards, GS-9, Career Management Intern, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, "is a commitment to children."

Ralph Hines, GM-14, Chief, International Studies Branch, Office of Postsecondary Education, says: "In my job, the number one thing is setting priorities. One of the biggest problems is time management, knowing how to stretch yourself across a variety of activities so that you can come up with something that's effective."

Luis Catarineau says: "It helps to have taught in a classroom or to have been involved in management of a program because often when you go to monitor, the staff suggests ways to improve their program, and a lot of it has to do with classroom management and curriculum development."

Robert Stonehill says: "The most important skill is to watch where things are going and to understand the implications of new programs and new capabilities and new technologies for reaching teachers and the public—that eye to where the trends are."

Jean Hunt, GS-13, Office of Indian Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, says: "A specialist should have versatility and ability to handle stress. He or she should be able to relate to different people, ranging from school superintendents to parent committee members."

Mike Ward says, "You have to be open-minded, fair, and supportive. You have to understand that we don't have ownership of what we do. We work for the field, and we have to be able to hear

what people are saying and be able to respond to what's happening."

Karen Kershenstein says: "Specialists must have good analytical skills and computer expertise in terms of data base management or spreadsheets, in addition to word processing."

Stonehill says: "You have to be persistent. You need to be a sales person to convince people that some new directions are worth going in and investing in."

"You have to be outspoken and feel comfortable about expressing your ideas or the positions of the Department," says Harkin.

Hines says: "You have to be patient, but also aggressive. You need to be a self-starter, someone who listens and takes direction from people in positions of higher authority, but you shouldn't always wait to be told whether to go in direction A, B, C, or D. You need to research those things and decide when you have enough information."

Harpreet Sandhu, GS-13, program manager for the Emergency Immigrant Education Program and the Recent Arrivals Program in the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, says: "You need good communication skills and the ability to coordinate with different offices within the Depart-

Jill Edwards

Career Management Intern
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
GS-9, 2 years internship

Jill Edwards joined the Department at the GS-7 level as a Career Management Intern for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), rotating jobs every seven months. Edwards also took courses through the Horace Mann Learning Center and the Office of Personnel Management on program evaluation, the federal budget process, computer training, and other topics. After two years, Edwards, now a GS-9, will receive her permanent assignment.

"It's an excellent program," says Edwards, "because it's given me a sense of the different activities within OERI and how those activities fit in the overall picture of education reform and the national goals. It's also given me a sense of how the programs operate."

Edwards has a bachelor's degree in elementary education with a minor in biology and K-8 and secondary biology certification. After two years in the Peace Corps teaching in a rural school in Kenya, Edwards earned a master's in Social Foundations of Education.

At the Department she has worked with the National Center for Education Statistics

and the Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching (FIRST) on the Eisenhower National Math and Science Program. "That gave me experience in the grants process," she says, "—grants from A-Z." She is now with Programs for the Improvement of Practice (PIP), the National Diffusion Network, whose role is to identify exemplary programs and award grants for dissemination or demonstration.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: "Keeping my morale up, not letting the bureaucracy get me down. I look at it as a trajectory. We're changing course—slowly—and at the same time we're moving forward, but it's so slow that sometimes that lack of immediate evidence that you're making a difference can be very frustrating. But if you look with a long-range perspective, you are making progress."

ment. One needs to monitor a project and detect inconsistencies. You have to compare the project to the application. We don't have enough travel funds; we have to rely on grantees' evaluation reports and telephone communication. I'm careful to see if what they are reporting is making any difference—are the kids making progress? It's a big responsibility to see that the funds are spent correctly. You have to be creative in how you get that information."

Arthur Cole says: "How you understand government is important—your understanding of education at the state and local levels and your ability to get things done."

"Specialists need enthusiasm, commitment to work, willingness to be open to new ideas and contradictory opinions, and a passion for excellence," says LeTendre.

Luis Catarineau

Program Officer, State Education Agency Program and Transitional Bilingual Education Program
Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs
GS-13, 33 years service

Luis Catarineau entered government as a GS-2 clerk typist at the Bureau of Natural Gas. He studied bookkeeping and accounting at night and rose to a GS-6 statistical clerk. He joined the Office of Education as a GS-6 account maintenance clerk in 1968. His bachelor's degree was in community education with a minor in educational administration, and he has earned a master's degree in business and public administration.

Now a GS-13, Catarineau's primary responsibility is to coordinate the funding for the State Education Agency Program and the Transitional Bilingual Education Program. He reviews grants, budgets, budget modifications, and program modifications, does site monitoring, and reviews applications.

Catarineau emphasizes the importance of focusing on end results, which in his office means teaching English to students with limited English proficiency. He says, "We do a lot of administrative work here, monitoring, going to the field, and following the regulations. A good budget recommendation, a good program recommendation will affect the kids. The bottom line is serving the kids."

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: *"This job is full of challenges. The biggest is to complete the funding recommendations. We have a lot of deadlines. The funding process for the State Education Agency Program is at the same time as funding for the Transitional Program so I have to work on them simultaneously to get the job done. Also, I'm a team leader for the State of California. The team leader's responsibility is to coordinate the work, to provide technical assistance to team members, to review the work for accuracy, and to assist the division director in the flow of the work."*

TIPS FROM EDUCATION PROGRAM SPECIALISTS ON HOW TO SUCCEED

Stonehill: "Learn the ropes. Learn how the Department works, how the government works. Learn how successful people get things done. Many people live in their little niches and are not familiar with government and their own agency and the way the legislative and executive branches work together, the role of OMB (Office of Management and Budget), how a bill or appropriation gets passed. These are very fundamental things that most people don't know the way an insider should know. To be effective in the bureaucracy, you have to know these things."

Hines: "Find yourself a mentor, someone who knows the ropes and can give you some feedback on different things you need to focus on. Utilize the training office for certain skills not available through the work situation."

Banfield: "Work in a program that you love. If you really love the program that you are administering, it's fun and rewarding. It would be difficult to work in a program that didn't excite you."

Hunt: "The skills specialists need are learnable. Study the legislation and do research. It's important to have an interest in your program—more than interest—a connection."

Harkin: "Keep your eyes and ears open. Be on top of what's going on with the states. At least read highlights or executive summaries of studies and reports so you know what's cooking. Attend workshops, seminars, and lunchtime presentations. Exposure is very important. If you stay in your office just sitting and reacting to everything that comes to your desk and not initiating anything, you're in trouble."

Cole: "Get started fast. It's important to keep up in your field to stay on top of the literature. Make sure you are credentialed. Educators are credential-conscious. Try to get experiences in different offices, just to see how things are done because there's no one way of addressing problems. To the extent that you can, move around. Set up goals for specialized training so that you're always learning fresh ideas. Have a long-range plan for your own development."

Vinson: "You should like to travel. Specialists often work in teams so you have to be flexible and have the ability to work with other team members. Be open to new ideas."

LeTendre: "The nature of our work is of vital importance. Remember that everything we do affects children and youth in our country. Because you're affecting humanity, you must believe in public service, believe it matters. Be willing to do any job, no matter how great or small. View your work as important. I have come from a GS-9 to an SES, and every job I had, I felt was

important because there was an opportunity at the national level of public service. Never underestimate the influence of what you do. You have such an opportunity to affect the lives of children all over the nation.

"Understand that it's not structures that accomplish things; it's people. People get hung up about internal bureaucracy and the frustration it can generate. I haven't been terribly frustrated because I have always set out to make things work. You can do that when you're committed to doing the right thing. It may take a while, but you will accomplish those things you are truly committed to do.

"Be loyal to your organization and the people with whom you work. Understand and learn every detail you can about the program you work with. Be passionate about your work. Care deeply about what you are doing. Have a sound value system, a system of ethics that comes before policies and practices. You need to have integrity, a sense of fairness; those are key values of effective people. You must stand for something, not just in terms of your work, but as an individual."

Catarineau: "Never forget that the work you do administratively eventually gets down to the kids so the work has to be done to the best of your ability. Whatever decision you make, good or bad, will affect the kids."

Mike Ward

Chief of Secondary Education Transition Branch
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
GS-14, 13 years service

"During and after college, I saw that kids with disabilities were leaving school, and the outcome was grim. We needed to do something to help them become adults and become more independent," says Mike Ward. "I now head the Transition Program, and we help disabled youth make the transition from high school to college, employment, or independent living."

Ward joined the Department 13 years ago as a GS-11. He had his B.A. in psychology and M.S. in rehabilitation counseling. He had worked as a rehabilitation counselor for New York and as a policy analyst for the Council for Exceptional Children. While at the Department, Ward earned a Ph.D. in education. "I just hung in there and got my degree, going at night for six years."

Ward, who has held three jobs at the Department and is now a GS-14, credits his success to his knowledge of the field of special education, knowledge of disabilities, and his involvement with disabilities.

Communication skills are vital for a specialist, says Ward. "I'm in charge of two discretionary grant programs, and the most critical part is the initial and ongoing contact with the field. We must find out what they need and let them know what we want. Education program specialists also need an ability to analyze information to come up with something coherent."

Ward has taken numerous courses from the Horace Mann Learning Center. He taught himself how to use a computer which accommodates his physical disability, and he says this greatly increased his productivity.

BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT: "I am most personally excited by the fact that now we have money for 26 demonstration projects that identify and teach skills necessary for self-determination. The whole idea is to give kids with disabilities more control over their lives, more input in their decision-making. It was my idea, and people are very responsive."

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Successful specialists believe education is a process, not an end. They continue learning on the job, in organized training, and through independent reading and study.

Cole says: "I try to get in 40 hours a year minimum in training. That's been very helpful. I've had a lot of management training and training in computers." Cole focuses on "things that help you manage projects and people."

Edwards advises: "Get whatever training you can. Try to learn what is going on in the Department. When they have brown bag lunches, get involved. If there is a topic you find of interest and there is an informal task force, you could get involved, even if you are not working in that area. That gives you a way of networking, meeting other people outside your program to find out what's going on and expand your realm of experience."

When ERIC Program Director Stonehill entered the Department in 1976 with a Ph.D in research and evaluation, he was "somewhat" computer literate. "Most of what I learned about ERIC and information science and technology for communication and dissemination, I learned on the job," he says. "I joined the American Society for Information Science, and I've done a lot of reading. The whole field didn't exist in 1976 when I got my doctorate.

"What's more important than what you learned in the past is the idea that learning continues—not just in the field that you're working in, but learning how the government works, how the Department works, who's doing what. Because you have a job to do doesn't mean that you just do that job and stop acquiring new skills and new perspectives."

Horace Mann Learning Center

The Department of Education's Horace Mann Learning Center provides high-quality cutting-edge learning opportunities to foster individual and organizational excellence. For education program specialists, the Center offers classes in core, professional, and leadership topics. Core topics recommended for specialists include Building Effective Teams, Introduction to Statistics, and Data Collection. Core classes are also offered in operational math, written and oral communication, and project management.

Professional development classes consist of five classes in facets of contracting; six classes on grant topics; and courses in Designing and Improving Project Evaluation, and Disseminating the Results of Funded Projects.

The leadership segment of the program provides Education Issues Seminars and a wide range of courses in supervising and management skills.

The Department of Education Skill Clinic

The Skill Clinic provides a full spectrum of services for employees to upgrade skills and increase job satisfaction. The Skill Clinic offers self-assessment services that help employees find out what skills they need for positions that match their interests and personal styles. One-on-one, on-site, confidential career counseling helps employees develop a career profile and plan. A referral system of on-line sources, catalogs, and periodicals connects employees with information on internal and external training opportunities.

Self-paced learning lets employees develop key skills via state-of-the-art tools, such as multi-media, interactive computer programs, self-study manuals, and instructional video and audio tapes.

Training Outside the Department

Individual offices support training for their education program specialists at conferences, universities, and through other sources of professional development outside the Department.

Jean Hunt

Education Program Specialist
Office of Indian Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
GS-13, 1 1/2 years service

Jean Hunt, specialist with the Office of Indian Education, came to the Department 1 1/2 years ago as a GS-12 with 12 years experience. She had been a teacher, director of an adult education program, director of an alternative high school, and field specialist for a National Indian organization that provided training and technical assistance. She has experience in program management, school board training, and curriculum development.

Hunt, who studied home economics and earned a master's degree in public administration, is responsible for grants management for about 100 public schools in the eastern United States. "Schools may be focusing on tutoring, cultural enrichment, career development, drug prevention education, and Native American curriculum development," she says.

"A specialist should be able to relate to different people from grass roots to top-level educators. We work with parent committees in the communities, state school superintendents and national people in this office."

The best preparation "was providing training and technical assistance to Indian-controlled schools and public schools." Her understanding of Native American culture, she says, helps her work with schools that are developing culturally relevant curricula. "I can say, 'I was the principal of an Indian alternative school.' This makes it easier to relate to grantees and for grantees to accept technical assistance."

BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT: "I have used my analytical skills in analyzing programs and in analyzing how the legislation fits into those programs or if those programs fit into the legislation.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: "Trying to keep 100 schools going."

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